

Trail Talk

Conasauga Ranger District

February – March 2009



“Many of our greatest American thinkers, men of the caliber of Thomas Jefferson, Henry Thoreau, Mark Twain, William James, and John Muir, have found the forest an effective stimulus to original thought”

A quote from Bob Marshall



TEAM Conasauga Volunteers – Where the difficult is done immediately and the impossible takes a little longer.



February – **Fred Pilcher** was first out this month when he cleaned up a dump site at Gentry Gap dispersed camping area...**Mike and Rob Palmeri, Barry Gilley, and David Smith** with the **Ellijay Mountain Bike Club** had a rigorous day clearing blowdowns off the Pinhoti Trail...**Wanda Brown** volunteered several hours over two days to update the TEAM Conasauga volunteer website...**Conrad Fernandez** with the **North Georgia (Dalton) Chapter of SORBA** worked on removing blowdowns from the Pinhoti Trail in preparation for the Snake Creek Gap



Billy Gifford & George Cobb clear a blowdown from Beech Bottom Trail.

Mountain Bike Time Trials...Ken Napierkowski spent a day maintaining the Jacks River Fields Campground...**Jim Bishop, Bob and Mary Korch** cleaned a multitude of water bars and dips on the north end of the Hickory Creek Trail...**Troy and Wanda Brown** continued to lead the wilderness blowdown removal effort by removing several trees off the Beech Bottom Trail...**Fred Pilcher** had two productive days, first cleaning up the litter at the Chestnut Mountain Range, then performing regular maintenance at the Pocket and

Keown Falls Picnic Area...Jacks River Fields looked great after **Junior Kyle, Melinda and Lakota**

Towe with the **Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia** volunteered several hours of grooming the site...A team of **Benton MacKaye Trail Association** volunteers cleared debris from the Benton MacKaye Trail north of Bushy Head Gap...**Fred Pilcher** returned to Chestnut Mountain Range on two consecutive weeks to continue the litter campaign...**Mark Voykovic** had a good day on wilderness patrol tearing down fire rings, removing blowdowns, and bringing the Leave No Trace message to visitors... **Troy and Wanda Brown** sawed blowdowns from the East Cowpen Trail to clear the way for the major work project...Then, the following day, 21 volunteers gathered at the Cottonwood Patch Campground on a beautiful winter day to tackle both trail dip maintenance and blowdown removal for the monthly scheduled workday. A skilled team of sawyers from Alabama consisting of **Al Sanders, George Cobb, Jeff Johnson and Billy Gifford** successfully removed the massive red oak blowdown from the lower Beech Bottom Trail. And, 73 dips were maintained on the lower 2.7-mile section of the East Cowpen Trail by this hard-working group of trail volunteers: **Bob and Mary Korch, Jim Bishop, Larry Wheat, Larry Jones, Amos Burrell, Troy and Wanda Brown, Anthony Emanuel, Patti Nethery, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Steve Clayton, John Coffey, Vickie Davis, Larry Jones, Tom Owens, and Jeff Krivo.** Following the workday, volunteers returned to the Cottonwood Patch for a time of food and fellowship. This same day, **Charlie Crider and Gail Milner** put a lot of sweat equity into blowdown removal on the Pinhoti Trail north of the Highway 100 Trailhead...**Kathy Hansen and Larry Wheat** reconned a section of the Pinhoti Trail to determine maintenance needs...And finally, **Wanda Brown** returned to the volunteer website to perform some needed database updates. TEAM Conasauga logged **439.5 hours** to the cause this month.

March – **Junior Kyle and Melinda and Lakota Towe** kicked off this month at Jacks River Fields doing their usual great job at campground maintenance...**Fred Pilcher** hit the ground running performing recreation maintenance at Dry Creek Trailhead, Houston Valley ORV Area and the Pocket on three consecutive days...**Larry Wheat and Laurie Durgin** blazed the proposed trail locations at Dry Creek...**Troy Brown, Jim Bishop, and Tom and Tannis Blackwell** worked with a group of **Michigan college students** maintaining waterbars on the lower Conasauga River Trail to support an annual “Alternative Spring Break” college project sponsored by the Nature Conservancy ...**Wanda Brown** did a recon of the Bear Creek/Pinhoti Trail System while **Troy Brown** moved the vehicle around for her. **Wanda**



“Alternative Spring Breakers” on the Conasauga River Trail.

scouted another section of the Pinhoti the following week...**Amos Burrell** had a long, very strenuous, but fun (his words) day assisting the Ranger District on a prescribed burn in the Mill Creek area... **John Coffey and Sidney Perdue** returned to the East Cowpen Trail to slingblade a grown up section of trail...**Martha Fillingham** accomplished the routine recreation maintenance at Jacks River Fields...**Jim Holland** made a large commitment of time over a 4-day period to become certified as a chainsaw and crosscut saw instructor which will be a tremendous aid to trail volunteers and the Forest Service...**Fred**



Pilcher spent two days doing trailhead maintenance at the Houston Valley ORV Area...**Larry Wheat** returned to Dry Creek to blaze more trail locations...Panther Creek Trail was the scene for this month’s scheduled workday where waterbar maintenance was the task at hand. Some 18 volunteers made short work of the maintenance and earned an earlier than expected panoramic view from Sunset Rock atop Panther Creek Falls. Volunteers enjoyed a trail feast and some social time before returning home. Trail workers included **John McMenamin, Jim Bishop, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Michael Boggs, Troy and Wanda Brown, Amos Burrell, Larry Jones, Scott, Janet and Zack Jordan, Bob and Mary Korch, Tom Owens, Jerry Phurrough, Gail Milner, and Taylor**

Slate...Jim Bishop, Bob and Mary Korch, and Troy and Wanda Brown staffed a **Conasauga District Trail Volunteers** table at the REI store in Kennesaw to spread the word about the good works of TEAM Conasauga and to recruit new volunteers to our ranks...**Fred Pilcher** worked two more days providing recreation maintenance at the Pocket and Dry Creek Trailhead...**Wanda Brown** again updated the volunteer website. And, she took time out to scout another section of the Pinhoti Trail for needed maintenance while **Troy** helped to shuttle the vehicle around to her. Team Conasauga can be proud of its **500.5 hours** of volunteer accomplishments this month. Thanks to all of you for both your hard work and commitment to improving conditions on our National Forest.



What happened to Spring? With temperatures in the 80s, it seems we have jumped straight into the heat of summer with little time to acclimatize ourselves. A recent volunteer workday saw several trail workers suffering the effects. Here are some things to remember as we enter the season of heat and humidity:

- **Hydration is the key.** Before work, you should take extra fluids to prepare for the heat. Drink at least 1 to 2 cups of water, juice, or a sports drink before work. Avoid excess caffeine; it hastens fluid loss in the urine.
- **Lighten the load.** Take what you need to be prepared, but don't overload your pack unnecessarily. Consider freeze-dried foods that weigh less and repackage your food from its original container to avoid needless pounds. If you are positively sure of your water sources along the trail, carry a water filter and pump water throughout the day to avoid carrying large amounts of water weight.
- **Dress appropriately.** Wear light-weight, loose-fitting clothing in lighter colors that will reflect the heat. While a billed cap is effective to keep the sun directly off your head and face, if you're under the tree canopy it is better to keep your head hat-free while traveling to and from the work site. However, always remember to wear your Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), a hardhat, gloves and sturdy footwear, while performing all trail maintenance activities.
- **While working, pace yourself and take several fluid breaks every hour.** Your body can lose a liter or more of fluid per hour. Get in the habit of sipping water every 15 minutes or so, rather than guzzling water at a single rest break. A hydration system makes it much easier to accomplish this and you will invariably drink more. Studies also show that workers will drink more when lightly flavored beverages are available. Providing a portion of fluid replacement with a carbohydrate/electrolyte sport beverage will help you retain fluids and maintain energy and electrolyte levels.
- **After work, you need to continue drinking to replace fluid losses.** Thirst always underestimates fluid needs, so you should drink more than you think you need. Rehydration is enhanced when fluids contain sodium and potassium, or when foods with these electrolytes are consumed along with the fluid.
- **Make potassium-rich foods like bananas and citrus fruits a regular part of your diet, and drink lots of lemonade, orange juice, or tomato juice.** In camp, limit the amount of caffeine drinks such as coffee and colas and avoid alcoholic drinks as they contribute to dehydration.
- **Assess your hydration.** Observe the volume, color and concentration of your urine. Low volumes of dark, concentrated urine or painful urination indicate a serious need for rehydration. Other signs of dehydration include a rapid heart rate, weakness, excessive fatigue, and dizziness. Continuing to work in a dehydrated state can lead to serious consequences, including heat cramps, heat exhaustion, or heatstroke

Watch for these symptoms among you and your fellow trail workers...

Heat Cramps

Symptoms: Painful muscle cramping that affects legs or abdominal muscles; heavy sweating.

What to do: Have victim sit quietly in a cool place. Stretch cramping muscle. If victim is not vomiting, give sips of clear juice or cool, lightly salted water. Give victim ½ glass of liquid every 15 minutes for one hour. Stop fluids if vomiting occurs.

Heat Exhaustion

Symptoms: Pale and clammy skin; heavy sweating; weakness; dizziness; headache; nausea; possible muscle cramps, vomiting and fainting.

What to do: Have victim lie down in a cool place. Raise feet 8” to 12”. Loosen clothing. If victim is not vomiting, offer liquids. Stop fluids if vomiting occurs. Place cool, wet, cloths on victim’s forehead and body. If symptoms are severe, or last longer than 30 to 60 minutes, get prompt medical attention.

Heatstroke

Symptoms: Extremely high body temperature (105F+); red, hot, dry skin; sweat may be seen on some victims; rapid, strong pulse; possible unconsciousness or confusion.

What to do: Call 911. Undress victim and put them into a tub of cold (not iced) water or a stream. Sponge skin with cool water. Fan victim. Do not over chill (stop treatment when body temperature is lowered to 102F, or when mental status improves). Dry victim off after body temperature is lowered; do not give victim alcoholic or caffeinated beverages as they interfere with temperature regulation.



CONASAUGA LORE...

What’s in a name? Conasauga Names and Their Definitions

Betty Gap – After a woman named Betty who had a cabin at the gap.

Bray Field – Family named Bray had a boarding house here during the logging in the 1920’s.

Camp 20 Trail – Alternate name for Hickory Creek Trail; it was the trail to the 20th logging camp of the Conasauga River Lumber Company.

Chattahoochee – Creek Indian word for land of flowering rocks; in the spring the very rocks seemed to blossom with flowers.

Or

Flour rocks. From the pounding of corn on rocks.

Uchee = corn; hoochee = pounded or beaten

Cohutta – Shed on poles, from outline on the horizon **Or** High places

Conasauga – Sparkling waters **Or** Strong horse. When the Conasauga River flooded, it could not be controlled, “like a strong horse”.

Jacks River – After an Indian named Jack who carried people across the river on his back.

Cowpen Mountain – Cattle were free-ranging in the mountains. Name comes from a holding pen used to round them up.



Invasive Plant Species a Threat to Southern Forests



Nepal Grass

Non-native invasive plant species (NNIS) are rapidly spreading through the natural habitats across the Chattahoochee National Forest displacing native plants, and disrupting natural ecosystem processes. Often called non-native, exotic, non-indigenous, alien, or noxious weeds, they occur as trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, ferns, and forbs. Some have been introduced into this country accidentally, but most were brought here as ornamentals or for livestock forage.

The Cohutta Wilderness has not been immune to the spread of these invasive plants. A NNIS survey conducted last year across the wilderness revealed the presence of several non-native species. The good news is the non-natives are generally confined to old home sites, old roadbeds and trail sides and are not expected to spread throughout the general forest environment. The old cabin site at

Beech Bottom has the highest number and variety of non-native plant species in the Wilderness; you can find exotic species such as Mimosa, Chinese chestnut, Autumn olive, Paulownia and Multiflora rose there. The Hemptop Trail (an open road until 1986) and the northern Hickory Creek Trail have several non-native plants present. The most common, widely distributed, non-native plant species found is Nepal grass (*Microstegium vimineum*), also known as Nepalese browntop and Japanese Stilt Grass.

For more information on invasive plant species, visit these websites: <http://www.fs.fed.us/invasivespecies/index.shtml> and www.gaeppc.org.



Conasauga Bits and Pieces

- **Lake Conasauga and Pocket Campgrounds now open.** These popular recreation areas are now open for the season. If you would be interested in serving as a Campground Host at the Pocket, please let us know.
- **Hemlock Woolly Adelgid update.** Several groups of Hemlock trees in the Cohutta Wilderness infected by the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid were treated recently to kill the exotic pest insect. Treatment locations included Thomas Creek, Conasauga Creek, Tumbling Creek, and the Conasauga River below Betty Gap.
- **Equestrian trails analysis public meetings.** The Conasauga Ranger District is beginning an analysis of its equestrian trail network to determine whether its current system of horse trails is adequate to meet public demand. Two public meetings are planned to receive input: May 5th in Dalton and May 6th in Ellijay. To find out more or to register to attend, contact Larry Thomas at lrthomas@fs.fed.us.



- **National Trails Day Event Change.** You will notice on this newsletter calendar that the National Trails Day (NTD) event has been changed from the Pinhoti Trail to the Emery Creek Trail. Why? Thanks to the ongoing commitment to the Conasauga District trail system, we have had difficulty finding a multi-use trail open to hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers that needs a major amount of work... a very nice situation to find ourselves in. While we could not find a multi-use trail that fit the bill, we did identify major maintenance needs for the Emery Creek Trail, a hiking only trail. While we would have preferred to focus NTD on a trail open to all non-motorized users, we hope everyone will join us for this annual celebration of our trails.



Mark Your Calendars:

- **May 13** Chainsaw Recertification Class (by invitation only)
Villanow Work Center @ 9:30 AM
- **May 16** Working Weekend #53 – Ballfield Group Camp.
Tearbitches (hiking) Trail – slingblading, trimming, waterbar maintenance
- **May 19-20** Chainsaw Volunteer Certification Class (by invitation only)
- **June 6** National Trails Day – Pinhoti (multi-use) Trail.
Multiple projects, multiple locations – to be announced
- **July 18** Hemptop (multi-use) Trail – slingblading.
Annual event with Benton MacKaye Trail Association
- **August 15** Chestnut Lead (hiking) Trail – slingblading/trimming/waterbars



Note: In addition to these scheduled workdays, we are trying to find volunteers who are interested in working independently or with a small group to tackle these projects and others.

- Volunteer(s) to slingblade upper Panther Creek Trail
- Volunteer(s) to trim lower and upper Emery Creek Trail
- Volunteer(s) to trim lower Rough Ridge Trail above the river

If you are interested, please contact Ed at 706-695-6736 x 118 or e-mail elang@fs.fed.us.



**Tom Owens & Jeff Krivo claim this is the
“world’s longest waterbar”!**



**Amos Burrell, Patti Nethery & Anthony Emanuel
begin a dip on East Cowpen Trail.**



Lunch Break on East Cowpen Trail.